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FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6194
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

UNCLAS KIGALI 000452

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TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [RW](#)

SUBJECT: FIRES CONTAINED IN VOLCANOES PARK, GORILLAS NOT
AFFECTED

11. (U) Summary: Wildfires on the edge of the Volcanoes National Park, home to the silverback mountain gorillas, have been contained. The extent of damage to the park is being assessed, but according to Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGFI), the fires did not significantly impact the Gorillas habitat, nor has there been other loss of life. Offered Africom assistance was not needed. End summary.

12. (U) Wildfires broke out in the Volcanoes National Park in northern Rwanda on July 18. Local government officials reported the fires to be under control as of July 21. The fires began on the eastern edges of the park, allegedly started by bee farmers using traditional methods to smoke out beehives to harvest honey. District Mayor Samuel Sembagari told reporters that this was the largest wildfire in the park since 1978.

13. (U) Katie Fawcett, Director of DFGFI Karisoke Research Center, confirmed to econoff July 23 that the fires did not affect the silverback gorillas, which are mainly located in the central and western areas of the park. According to Fawcett, the eastern edge of the park is primarily a "grassland ecosystem not really used by the gorillas either in Rwanda or Uganda." Fawcett added that park has been unusually dry this year and that the extent of damage to plant species in the affected area was unclear.

14. (U) The Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) declined the offer of air assets by Africom to help control the fires. RDF General Gatsinzi, tasked with fighting the fires, initially requested assistance from Africom, but canceled the request on Tuesday afternoon, July 21, saying the "fires were contained."

CASPER